

## The Other Extreme: Physical Activity Levels in Underage International Hockey Players

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In Ireland, we have two major youth physical activity problems: high levels of teenage physical inactivity but equally as worrying, the amount of activity our talented young athletes participate in. Due to our small population, teenagers demonstrating sporting talent typically play multiple sports for multiple teams. While participation in multiple sports at a young age is desirable for athlete development, specialisation is normally required at 15 to 16 years old due to increased training demands as playing level increases from club to province or country. Involvement in numerous sports at a high level may lead to overplaying, burnout and dropout from sport. The aim of this preliminary research was to take a snapshot across an international playing season of three international underage hockey teams (U16 and U18 boys and girls) of the amount of physical activity they participated in on a regular basis. Each player on the squad was expected to complete an activity diary on a weekly basis and return it to the team's strength and conditioning coach. The full results of this research are still being analysed but preliminary findings are worrying. Players are involved in a wide diversity of sports but many of them share similar components of fitness. In training, this results in duplication of training with little variability. This also results in some aspects of fitness being neglected. Of most concern however is the lack of rest periods recorded in the diaries. Rest is essential for recovery and to maximise training adaptation but for these athletes, it is minimal or non-existent. In the long-term, this has consequences for injury, maximising potential and athlete development. These results suggest an increased need for communication between coaches and teachers, and increased athlete education to reduce risk of burnout and dropout.